



## NATURE'S WAY.

There are roses up an' noddin'  
By each fence along the road,  
An' there ain't a bit o' pathway  
Where rose petals ain't been blowed;  
Bridal wreaths are all around us,  
An' they're locusts overhead;  
Nature don't hold back her blossoms,  
Like some folks do, till we're dead.

All the world's a-bud an' sproutin',  
An' the shoots are bustin' thoo  
Where the ground lies soft an' mellow,  
An' the violets are blue,  
An' the smell o' yellow jasmamines  
Is just soakin' ev'ry breeze,  
An' it's good to be a-livin',  
An' amongst 'em to your knees.

Folks kin bring their wreaths an' what-nots  
If they feel like when I die;  
But I'd rather have my flowers  
An' my share o' cloudless sky  
While I'm livin'. I'm o' fashioned,  
I expect, but I won't know  
'Bout no banks and wreaths o' roses  
When I'm layin' still an' low.

That's why I think Nature hits it  
About right; fer I allow  
If a thing's at all worth doin'  
Then it's worth th' doin' now!  
An' she does it now, an' always!  
An' by jingo! in th' spring,  
When she flings things round this  
fashion,  
I just got ter up and sing!  
—J. M. Lewis, in Houston Post.

## The Hermit

A Story of the Wilderness

By CHARLES CLARK MUNN  
Author of "Pocket Island," "Uncle Terry"  
and "Rockhaven."

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## CHAPTER XXVII.—CONTINUED.

"They'll follow, fast enough," returned Levi, taking his share of good things, now that the need of haste was evident, "they want to earn that \$1,000 ez has been offered for McGuire. We've got a good six hours' start on 'em, even 'lowin' daylight paddlin'." he added, glancing at the sun, "'n' time enough to hide the hermit where they can't find him, that is, 'lowin' he's the man you want."

Martin looked at his guide in surprise. He had confided to him the object of his trip; what Levi knew of this McGuire's history he had imparted before that long night journey, but no definite plan of action had been agreed upon so far.

"I'm going to let you manage this affair," replied Martin, after a pause. "You know the woods, you know the danger, and what I want. If the hermit is the man I think, we must keep him out of these officers' hands if we have to tie him hand and foot and carry him off bodily."

"I wished we'd got more time," returned Levi, thoughtfully; "we're in a sort o' pocket up thar, 'n' 'bout the only chance o' gittin' out is down the way we go in, 'n' that means runnin' right into these ossifers, sure pop. Thar's a small stream comin' into that lake whar he is, but ye can't work up more 'n a mile 'n' it ends in a beaver dam. D—n 'em," he muttered a little later, "I wish we could start 'em up toward the Moosehorn 'n' the hut with the signal wire. That's one o' McGuire's hidin'-spots, I've a notion."

But time was flying, Martin uneasy to be off, and the moment breakfast was eaten, the smouldering fire was drenched with water to leave no smoke sign, and the canoes pushed off.

And now came an exhibition of woodcraft new even to Martin. Levi, always the last to get into his canoe, waited until the other had moved out, then, stepping into the water, reached back with his paddle and levelled every track in the sand and smoothed down the furrows cut by canoe bows when they landed, then with a tin cup he threw water over them all.

"They may find somebody built a fire," he said, as he took his seat, "but they can't tell when."

And now forward once more into and up the slow-running stream, Martin and the doctor had ascended, as they supposed in pursuit of a wild man. It seemed longer now, for pursuers were hot after them. It lent vigor to their paddling, however, and when the quick water was reached, and they halted for a breathing spell, Martin consulted his watch and was astonished to find it not yet ten. He had been so keyed up with excitement, the night journey, the brief sleep and all, that he had lost sense of time. He had not even noticed the sun. It was reassuring in one way, for they must still be many hours in advance of their pursuers, and they pushed on with rising spirits.

For over two months now Martin had been slowly reaching the conclusion that this old hermit must be the long-missing Amzi. At first a vague suspicion, then a probability, and at last—so many times had he thought of it, comparing and shifting all data and gossip, recalling the old hermit's looks and nature as he found them, with all reports, that now he was ready to stake his life almost that the long mystery would soon be solved and the hermit found to be Angie's father. There were other and stronger chords than curiosity. His memory of boyhood days and Angie—his more mature and deeper love for her now—the realization of how she had been wronged, and beyond these, a burning desire to teach that miserly hypocrite, her uncle, a lesson in common honesty and manhood, moved him to action.

And just ahead, shining in the sunlight, was the little lake across which might be the one who could solve all mystery and serve justice.

Martin could hardly wait, and, although weary by loss of sleep and long

hours of steady paddling, when the prow of his canoe emerged from the tangle of alders and glided into the lake, he fixed his eyes on the thicket of spruce where the hut stood, and never lowered them until his canoe bow grated on the sandy landings.

Then, leaping ashore, he halted. "You had better go first," he said to old Cy, "the shock of seeing you may waken his memory. It's only a few rods up this path to the hut."

Half dreading, and yet longing to end the suspense, Martin followed his companion. Up the steep bank, among the thick-growing trees they crept stealthily until the stump-dotted garden opened into view, and beside it the hut. The fence was still in place, weeds and dried corn stalks filled the garden, and as old Cy opened the little gate and halted before the cabin, the squirrels frisked and chattered with sudden interest.

But the door was closed, and what was more discouraging, a bank of dry leaves had gathered at its foot. Cautiously, and with sinking heart Martin crept up, pushed the door open and looked in.

The hut was empty.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## A DESERTED CABIN.

For a few moments Martin stood looking into that deserted hut, at the narrow bunk on one side, the shelf-like table with its few dishes washed clean and piled together, the two rude stools, tiny stove, pots and pans. Then he turned to old Cy.

"Our night paddle was useless," he said in a dejected tone, "the hermit's gone."

And absent he had been for many weeks, as their observant eyes soon saw. Not only had the falling leaves drifted up against the door since last closed, but tiny shoots of grass had grown in the pathway and the garden had been left undisturbed since mid-summer. It was here that the long-continued absence of its owner was most in evidence. The ripened ears of corn had been picked clean by crows and squirrels, bean pods lay rotting on the ground, and a tangle of weeds covered the plot.

"There's one thing we kin do, anyhow," said old Cy, when the examination was ended, "we kin lay low round here 'n' watch them ossifers git fooled."

It is needless to say that his bubbling sense of humor was consoling to Martin just now, and the two returned to the landing, where a consultation was held. It ended in a decision to cross the lake, ascend a tributary stream, and, hiding the canoes, return through the woods, and, as old Cy said, "Lay low." This was carried out, and, an hour later, Levi stationed at the landing as an outer guard, while the rest found good hiding-places.

They had another hour's wait, and then Levi joined them with the information that the expected visitors were just crossing the lake.

It was not really courteous conduct on Martin's part to thus play the spy, but somehow he felt unkindly toward these minions of the law who doubted his word, and when they approached the cabin, was willing to listen.

"Guess the bird has flown," said the leader, as he halted before the hut and glanced at the little bank of leaves. Then, pushing the door in, he looked round, turned about, and added, "I wonder where these fellows are who gave us the slip?"

"I've a notion we may have passed 'em below here," responded his companion, "and they'll show up later."

Then they ransacked the garden, returned and entered the cabin, and made a more complete examination.

"He's been hiding here a good long time," asserted the leader, appearing again and glancing at the vines almost covering the hut. "This shack's been built all of ten years or more."

"Well, did you ever?" he exclaimed in astonishment, as a squirrel suddenly appeared from behind the cabin, ran up to him, halted, and the next instant was on his shoulder. "Here, you varmint, git off," he added, striking at the pretty creature, who leaped to the ground chattering.

Then the two men looked at one another, for that frisking squirrel's conduct was a revelation.

"I'm not just sure it's McGuire's hidin'-post after all," asserted one.

"Nor I either," responded the other. "This hut's been built twice ten years, or I'm no guesser; and McGuire was 'n' the chap to tame squirrels that way."

Then he glanced at the sun, now well down, and added, "We might as well camp here to-night and save trouble, besides there's taters and onions in the garden."

When the two had returned to their canoe, Martin softly whistled to his companions, and they also vanished into the woods to hold a consultation when secure from discovery.

"Wal," said old Cy, chuckling, "they've skinned us out o' a good camping spot 'n' now what's to be done?"

It was a poser, and Martin, seating himself on a fallen tree trunk, stroked his chin and reflected. "They'll light out in the morning," he said at last, "and until then are welcome to the hut. I've no use for them. Think of a brute in the shape of a man who would knock a harmless squirrel off his shoulder!"

The fact was that Martin had conceived a sudden and really causeless dislike for these two men who were only doing their duty.

"It'll be dark 'fore we know it," asserted old Cy, glancing into the shadowy forest, "'n' it's a good spell back to the canoes. Mebbe we better push on."

And push on they did, back to the concealed canoes, and a camp for the night. And later around the campfire a consultation was held in earnest. "We are here to find that hermit," asserted Martin, after all surmises as to his whereabouts had been exhausted,

"and hunt for him we will until snow flies."

"Amzi used to have the same trick o' wanderin' off fer days," responded old Cy, unprompted, "'n' he'll be back here bime by."

Martin smiled the first time in hours. "You seem sure it's Amzi," he said, grateful for the assurance.

"Sartin I do, 'n' more'n that, he ain't dead ez I callate your thinkin'; I'd feel it if he was."

The camp-fire conference terminated early, for the loss of sleep was felt by all, and when, late the next morning, Martin crept out of the tent, Levi and one canoe were missing while Jean was busy cooking breakfast.

It was eaten, and Martin was getting uneasy at Levi's prolonged absence when he appeared.

"They've gone; bag and baggage," he asserted with elation, "I watched till I see 'em shove off 'n' leave the lake."

But this did not solve the problem of where the hermit was, and Martin was as nonplussed as ever. Immediate danger to him was removed for the present, but where was the hermit? They were in the midst of a wilderness hundreds of miles in extent and traversed by streams running toward every point of the compass. To go in search of this strange recluse was sure to be like hunting for the proverbial needle and Martin realized it.

"There is but one thing to do," he said at last in a despondent tone, "and that is, stay around here with the hope that he may return. He has evidently been away from his hut many weeks, and therefore all the more likely to



FACED OLD CY, MOTIONLESS.

be back soon." Then, turning to old Cy, he added jokingly, "How would you like to go hunting for the wild man we found up the Moosehorn, just to kill time? There is another and more mysterious log cabin up that way that would be interesting."

"You kin go," responded old Cy, candidly, "'n' let me stay here 'n' watch fer Amzi. I won't be lunsome, 'n' maybe he may come any day. I'd like to ketch sight o' that wild man, but I'd a good deal rather ketch sight o' Amzi."

"We might go down to the lake where we slept in the bushes and camp there while waiting," said Martin, thoughtfully, "he's likely to return that way."

Then Levi suggested that they take possession of the hermit's hut, since it had been left unlocked. But Martin said no to that promptly, and, as leaving the spot at all had obvious drawbacks, in the end they decided to camp in a little cove just around from the hermit's landing spot and there await him. To take possession of even his miserable hovel was against Martin's feelings, and more than that, while the guides were establishing a permanent camp, he and old Cy returned to the cabin, and tried to remove all evidence of the other men's visit. Like many who hesitate at no vandalism, they used part of the stake fence for fuel, dug up and carried off many of the potatoes and onions, and left the debris of their meals to mould on the table.

"D—n," muttered Martin, as he looked at the desecration of this pitiful home, "I'd like to kick them, one at a time, from here to the lake and then pitch them in."

"No use gittin' ruffled," answered old Cy, "hogs is hogs the world over, 'n' always leave their tracks." Then he seated himself on a stump and chirped to one of the squirrels who frisked and chattered, and then leaped into his lap.

And now ensued a week of pleasant camp life, devoid of incident, but delightful to old Cy, and, as may be surmised from his method of life in Greenvale, where he was content to live alone in a hovel, work for Aunt Comfort part of the time and fish and hunt the rest, he borrowed no trouble and had few wants. If it rained he remained under shelter; if it was cold, he kept close to the fire, oblivious to whether he had more than a day's fuel on hand, and as for clothes—well, if they covered his nakedness and kept him warm, why, patches were as serviceable as the original material. And yet he was honest and kind-hearted to a fault, loving his fellow-man—in sympathy with him—far better than himself, and keenly alive to the beauties of nature and not devoid of reverence for the Almighty.

Beyond that and like Aunt Comfort, he had an abiding faith that all wrongs would be righted sooner or later, and everybody get what they deserved. And now he firmly believed that the long-missing Amzi would in due time return in the person of this old hermit; and meanwhile they had a chance to enjoy this hunter's paradise.

"The only critter I miss here is my dog," he observed at the close of the first day, when they returned to camp with a handsome buck and a dozen partridge; "I've sorter got used to talking to him when I'm content, 'n' he allus understands me. A dog's better 'n' most humans for company, 'n' keechin' the drift o' yer feelin's quicker. Once a dog loves yer, it's allus the same—

never changes, and ye don't have to keep warmin' it up. Me 'n' Amzi use to be that way, an' ud be so now, if he hadn't gone queer."

To Martin also, now that he was forced to remain content, old Cy was charming company, and his cheerful optimism, keen enjoyment of wood life, and childish gratitude for this, the one supreme and altogether glorious episode of his life, a daily source of pleasure. And, too, the old man transmitted to Martin some of his philosophic content and certainty that this expedition would turn out all right in the end.

And so the balmy Indian summer days wore on.

Each morning and night they visited the hut, lest its owner return unawares, and on these calls old Cy always had a handful of nuts ready for the squirrels, who soon recognized a friend and invariably ran to meet him. And how short these halcyon days were, even to impatient Martin! They journeyed up the stream that entered this lake, watched the deer feeding in the woods, surprised otter, mink, and muskrat in their haunts, and by patient waiting saw beavers at work on their dam. They caught a few trout in the spring hole that the hermit had located for Martin, and, when more meat was needed, killed another deer.

One week and then another of this matchless existence passed, and then one morning, as they drew near to the hut, there, sitting on the bench in front, hatless, coatless, with tangled hair and beard, was the hermit!

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## AMZI CURTIS.

At sight of the hermit Martin quickly stepped into hiding behind the tree, motioning old Cy to do the same. This strange recluse was not a dangerous beast, and yet so momentous was the question of approaching him, and whether or not he would admit himself to be Amzi, that Martin hesitated.

"You go first, Cy," he said in a low tone after thinking for a moment, "and I'll keep out of sight. Just walk up to him naturally and say, 'Hullo, Amzi, or accost him as you were accustomed to, and if you take him unawares, the chances are he will admit that he knows you.'"

It was with nervous dread that Martin watched the denouement of this forest drama. For months now he had thought of but little else except Angle, and proving this hermit to be her father, and thus obtain her rights. Now that the critical moment had arrived and the mystery was to be solved for good or never, well might he feel nervous. And as he watched old Cy leisurely approaching the cabin, he was almost breathless with suspense. Step by step old Cy drew nearer, now to the little gateway in the stake fence, now up the winding path among the stumps, until the hermit looked up and old Cy halted.

The critical moment had come. Twenty years had been bridged.

For a minute that seemed an hour the two looked at each other. Then the hermit rose, and for another to Martin—breathless moment faced old Cy, motionless. Martin could see him quite distinctly, his shrunken features, white beard, all awry, scanty hair, long arms hanging listlessly, gray shirt wide open at the throat, and patched trousers. He was like a pathetic statue of old age gone to seed, and outlined against a log cabin, half hid beneath scarlet vines.

Now old Cy took a step forward, both hands extended, the hermit raised his, their hands met, then up and down again and again in a hearty shake of old friendship.

The suspense was over and the long-missing Amzi found.

And now Martin, keeping out of sight, returned to his camp content to leave the two old friends by themselves, and while he waited he drew from a small hand-bag a flat package and opened it. It contained two pictures of Angle, one as a girl of 16 with hair in curls, the other a maturer face, sweet, yet dignified.

"Well, little girl," he almost whispered, glancing from one face to the other, "I've found your father, but God only knows what we can do with him or how it will affect you."

For a long time he looked at the two faces of one who now held the key of his life's happiness, and then folding them carefully, put the package in an inside pocket and glanced around. The morning's campfire still smouldered, a thin film of smoke rose from it, vanishing in the overhanging fir boughs above. The open tent just back disclosed a confusion of flattened boughs, beds, blankets, boxes, and clothing. Two rifles lay side by side in one corner, in front one canoe half out of water on the sandy shore, while across the rippled, sparkling lake, and in a cove, rested the other with Levi and Jean casting for trout—a collective wilderness picture which he never forgot.

For a half hour he sat in the mellow autumn sunshine, as if in a trance, and then came a rustling in the undergrowth and old Cy appeared.

"Well," said Martin, anxiously, "he sane and all right?"

[To Be Continued.]

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How his wife forgets her trials and calls up a smile every blessed night when he comes home from work.

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How she gives up her girlhood friends without a word of regret.

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